

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-45 (Cancelled)

46. (Currently Amended) A ring binder mechanism comprising:

a housing (10) having a C- or U-shaped cross-section with spring-elastic bendable flanks (28) for receiving two carrier rails (20), wherein said carrier rails, on their facing longitudinal edges, lie against each other forming a linkage axis (22) and, with their away-facing longitudinal edges (24), engage in mounting grooves (26) in the housing flanks (28), and

at least two half-rings (16) longitudinally spaced apart and rigidly connected with each of the carrier rails (20), wherein said half-rings (16) extend through openings (12) in a housing wall (13) and together form a ring (14),

wherein the carrier rails (20) are limitedly pivotable against each other about the linkage axis (22) between an open position and a closed position upon overcoming a spring force along the half-rings (16) produced by the housing flanks (28),

wherein at least one blocking element (32, 32') is slideable or moveable via operating element (18), wherein said at least one blocking element (32, 32') is essentially parallel to the linkage axis (22), wherein said at least one blocking element (32, 32') is slideable or moveable relative to the housing (10) and to the carrier rails (20), wherein when said at

least ~~lest~~ one blocking element (32, 32') ~~is~~ in the closed position, it protrudes into a free space (34) formed between the carrier rails (20) and the housing wall (13) and ~~blocks~~ the pivot movement of the carrier rails (20) is blocked, and wherein when said at least one blocking element (32, 32') ~~is~~ in the open position, ~~permits the pivot movement of~~ the carrier rails (20) may pivot about the linkage axis (22), and

wherein at least one blocking element (32, 32') is pre-tensioned in the direction of the closed position under the influence of a closing spring (36, 36').

47. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 46, wherein the operating element (18) is a lever pivotable with respect to the housing (10).

48. (Currently Amended) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 46, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is slideable or moveable in the open direction via the operating element (18) against the force of the closing spring (36, 36'), and wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is thereby unlockable.

49. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 46, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32'), when in the open position, lies against an opening detent (38, 110) under the influence of the closing spring (36, 36').

50. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 49, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is releaseable, in the closing direction, via the operating element (18) out of the opening detent (38, 110) against the force of the closing spring (36, 36') .

51. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 50, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is automatically lockable in the closed direction under the influence of the pre-tensioned closing spring (36, 36') .

52. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 47, wherein the operating element (18) includes an opening arm (40) abutting against the carrier rails (20) in the open position and which pivots said carrier rails (20) from the closed position into the open position while overcoming the spring force produced by the housing flanks (28) .

53. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 47, wherein the operating element (18) includes a closing arm (42) abutting against the carrier rails (20) in the closing direction and which pivots said carrier rails (20) from the open position into the closed position while overcoming the spring force produced by the housing flanks (28) .

54. (Currently Amended) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 46, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is

slideable or moveable in the closing direction against the force of the closing springs (36, 36'), and thereby releasable out of the opening detent (38, 110), directly by operation of the half-rings (16), or indirectly via the carrier rails (20).

55. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 47, wherein the operating element (18) in the open and/or closed direction exhibits at least two operating positions effective in different angular positions for a consequential operation of the at least one blocking element (32, 32') and the carrier rails (20).

56. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to one of Claim 47, wherein the blocking element (32) is provided on a lever arm (100) rigidly connected with the operating element (18), and wherein the operating element (18) is limitedly pivotable relative to the housing (10) and to the carrier rails (20) in the sliding direction of the blocking element (32).

57. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the blocking spring (36) is tensioned in between a housing fixed abutment and an operating lever fixed abutment (104, 102).

58. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 57, wherein the blocking spring (36) is a shank spring.

59. (Currently Amended) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the operating element (18) includes a control curve (108) guided on one control edge (106) of the housing (10), and wherein the operating element (18) and the blocking element (32), during pivoting against the force of the closing spring (36), are slideable or moveable from a closing position in the direction of the open position.

60. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 59, wherein the operating element (18) is rigidly connected with an opening arm (40) acting, in the opening direction, against the carrier rails.

61. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 60, wherein the opening arm (40) is separated from the blocking element (32) such that the blocking element (32), in the closed position of the operating element (18) and the carrier rails (20), is insertable in the free space (34) between the carrier rails (20) and the housing wall (13) under the influence of the closing spring (36), and, in the open position, abuts against a housing-fixed detent (110) under the influence of the closing spring (36).

62. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 61, wherein the blocking element (32) is simultaneously a closing arm (42) acting in the closing direction against the carrier rails (20).

63. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the operating element (18) includes at least one pivot pin element (112) that lies in the open position of the operating element (18) against a housing fixed mounting surface (114) under the influence of the closing spring (36) and forms a pivot axis for the blocking element (32) during the disengagement or unblocking and closing movement.

64. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 63, wherein the pivot pin element (112), in the closed position of the operating element (18), is raised from the housing-fixed mounting surface (114).

65. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the control curve (108) is provided on a control arm (120) extending through a wall opening (116) of the housing (10) and through a through-hole (118) in the linkage axis (22) area between the carrier rails (20).

66. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 65, wherein the control edge (106) is formed by a preferably curved border edge of the wall opening (116).

67. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the blocking element (32) is provided on a lever arm (100) extending through a wall opening (116) in the housing.

68. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 67, wherein the housing fixed detent (110) is formed by a preferably curved border edge of the wall opening (116).

69. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the blocking element (32) abuts in the closed direction, under the influence of the closing spring (36), against a housing-fixed end-stop (122).

70. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 69, wherein the end abutment (122) is wedge-shaped in the closing direction.

71. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 69, wherein the end abutment (122) is formed by a bowing out of the housing wall (13) protruding into the free space (34).

72. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the operating element (18) is mounted and guided on the housing (10) in the intermediate area between the rings (14), and includes an operating arm (18') extending through a loop of one of the rings (14).

73. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 72, wherein the operating arm (18') is

directed away from the lever arm (100) carrying the blocking element (32).

74. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 72, wherein the operating arm (18') faces the same side as the blocking element (32) carrying lever arm (100).

75. (Currently Amended) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 47, wherein the at least one blocking element is rigidly provided on a control rod, preferably formed as a pull rod, such that the operating element (18), under the influence of the closing spring, is limitedly slideable or moveable in the longitudinal direction of the carrier rails (20) relative to the housing (10).

76. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 75, wherein the closing spring is a pressure spring.

77. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 76, wherein the operating element (18) is provided at one end of the control rod and wherein the closing spring is tensioned in between the other end of the control rod and a housing fixed abutment.

78. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 77, wherein the operating element (18) pulls

against the control rod in the open position against the pressure force of the closing spring.

79. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 75, wherein the operating element (18) is rigidly connected with an opening arm acting in the opening direction against the carrier rails.

80. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 75, wherein the operating element (18) is rigidly connected with a closing arm acting in the closing direction against the carrier rails.

81. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to one of Claims 47, wherein at least one blocking element (32, 32') is connected with the operating element (18) via a tensioning member (44, 44') and a closing spring (36, 36') integrated in the tension member.

82. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein each blocking element (32, 32') is associated with the tension member (44, 44').

83. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 82, wherein at least two of the tension members (44, 44') are unitarily connected with each other, preferably via a connecting bridge (46).

84. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein each blocking element (32, 32') is associated with a closing spring (36, 36').

85. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein the tension member (44, 44') is a piece of wire.

86. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein the closing spring (36, 36') is a shank spring integrated in the tension member (44, 44'), of which one leg (48) is connected with the operating element (18) and the other leg (50) is supported on a housing-fixed or carrier rail-fixed mount (52) and is fixed spaced apart from the support point on the associated blocking element (32, 32').

87. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is formed as a sliding element guided in a guide slot or through-hole (54) between the two carrier rails (20), which exhibits a wedge shaped closing surface (36) facing in the closing direction, which in the closed position engages in the free space (34).

88. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 87, wherein the sliding element exhibits a face (58) which is wedge or arrow-shaped in the closing direction, and that the guide through-hole (54), on its

bordering edge (38) facing the end face (58), exhibits a thereto complimentary arrow shape.

89. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein the operating element (18) is rigidly connected with an opening arm (40) which lies, when moved in the opening direction, against the carrier rails (20).

90. (Previously Presented) The ring binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein the operating element (18) is rigidly connected with a closing arm (42) which lies, when moved in the closing direction, against the carrier rails (20).

91. (New) A ring binder mechanism comprising:

a housing (10) having a C- or U-shaped cross-section with spring-elastic bendable flanks (28) for receiving two carrier rails (20), wherein said carrier rails, on their facing longitudinal edges, lie against each other forming a linkage axis (22) and, with their away-facing longitudinal edges (24), engage in mounting grooves (26) in the housing flanks (28), and

at least two half-rings (16) longitudinally spaced apart and rigidly connected with each of the carrier rails (20), wherein said half-rings (16) together form a ring (14),

a housing (10) having a C- or U-shaped cross-section with spring-elastic bendable flanks (28) for receiving two carrier rails (20), wherein said carrier rails, on their facing longitudinal edges, lie against each other forming a linkage

axis (22) and, with their away-facing longitudinal edges (24), engage in mounting grooves (26) in the housing flanks (28), and at least two half-rings (16) longitudinally spaced apart and rigidly connected with each of the carrier rails (20), wherein said half-rings (16) together form a ring (14),

wherein the carrier rails (20) are limitedly pivotable against each other about the linkage axis (22) between an open position and a closed position,

wherein at least one blocking element (32, 32'):

- is slideable or moveable via operating element (18),
- is essentially parallel to the linkage axis (22),
- is slideable or moveable relative to the housing (10) and to the carrier rails (20), and

wherein when said at least one blocking element (32, 32') is in the closed position, the carrier rails (20) are blocked, and when said at least one blocking element (32, 32') is in in the open position, the carrier rails (20) may pivot about the linkage axis (22), and

wherein said at least one blocking element (32, 32') is pre-tensioned in the direction of the closed position under the influence of a closing spring (36, 36').

**IN THE ABSTRACT:**

The Abstract should be amended as follows (a clean copy of the abstract is attached at the end of this paper):

**Ring Binder Mechanism**

The invention concerns a ring binder mechanism for receiving loose, holed written materials. The ring binder mechanism includes a housing (10) having spring-elastic housing flanks (28) which can be urged open. Two carrier rails (20) are provided in the housing, which are pivotable along their facing longitudinal edges in the manner of a knee-joint against the spring effect of the housing flanks (28). At least two half-rings (16) are provided longitudinally spaced apart and rigidly connected with each of the carrier rails (20), and which pairwise form a ring (14). Further, at least one blocking element (32) is provided slideable or moveable via operating element (18) essentially parallel to the linkage axis (22) relative to the housing (10) and to the carrier rails (20) which, in the closed position, protrudes into a free space (34) formed between the carrier rails (20) and the housing wall (13) with blockage of the pivot movement of the carrier rails (20) and, in the open position, permits the pivot movement of the carrier rails (20). According to the invention at least one blocking element (32) is pre-tensioned in the direction of the closed position under the influence of a closing spring (36).